

# **Hungry for Love:**

## **Equipping WIC Staff to Tap into Relational Forces Impacting Family Mealtime Environments**

**Montana WIC Program**

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# Healthy Mealtime Environments

## A. Provide Four Things to Your Child

- Love
- Care
- Connection
- Food (hopefully nutritious)

## B. Five Jobs for a Parent/Caregiver

- Presence
- Power
- Emotional connection
- Expectations
- Build eating capabilities & life skills

## C. Provide Parent/Caregiver

- Easier mealtimes.
- Decrease in emotional disconnectedness between you and your child.
- Increase in emotional connectedness between you and your child.
- Opportunity to help your child acquire capabilities, connectedness, and life skills that help your child thrive in life.

## D. Goal

- Build a safe, nurturing, and developmentally challenging mealtime environment.

## **Eating Capabilities and Life Skills Learned at Mealtimes**

- 1. Learning that eating is one of life's great pleasures – physically, socially, and emotionally.**
- 2. Learning to be aware of your different levels of hunger and fullness.**
- 3. Learning to eat enough to satisfy your hunger.**
- 4. Learning to deal with small challenges in life with loving support.**
- 5. Learning to have a healthy emotional connection with a caring adult.**
- 6. Learning to say No and still be loved.**
- 7. Learning to receive No and still be loved.**
- 8. Learning to like a variety of new foods at a pace that is right for the child.**
- 9. Learning skills that contribute to keeping mealtimes pleasant.**
- 10. Learning to share about your life and thoughts and learning about others' lives and thoughts.**

# Receiving No and Still Being Loved

## The 3-Part Job:

1. Setting a limit (boundary) and maintaining the limit (boundary) by speaking truth to your child.
2. Letting your child know you understand what she is saying.
3. Using a sentence or phrase to let your child know you understand the feelings she is having (empathy).

## What it accomplishes:

- You set and keep a reasonable limit.
- You let your child know you understand he has feelings about receiving your limit. This helps your child keep a good emotional connection with you.

## Example 1                      Setting: Lunch time

- Child - *I don't feel like eating anything.*
- You - I can understand you don't want to eat anything right now. You're just not hungry. It is still great to have you at the table.

## Example 2                      Setting: Lunch time

- Child - *I'm hungry. I need to eat right now.*
- You - Your stomach is telling you how hungry you are. It is uncomfortable to be so hungry. We will be having lunch in 30 minutes.
- Child - *You don't understand. I'm really hungry. My stomach hurts.*
- You - You are so hungry! It is making your stomach hurt. I know you want to eat right now. It really is hard to be so hungry. We will be eating in 30 minutes and there will be plenty of food for you.

# Strategies for Building Healthy Mealtime Environments

## 1. Use the division of responsibility

- Parents are responsible for
  - What foods are provided at meals and snacks
  - When your child eats
  - Where your child eats
- Kids are responsible for
  - How much and whether they eat at each meal and snack

## 2. Set structured times for meals and snacks

- Have meals and planned snacks every 2-3 hours.
- Don't allow eating in-between so your child comes to the table with a good appetite.

## 3. Build emotional connectedness

- Sit with your child.
- Enjoy being with your child.
- Create and maintain a pleasant and enjoyable mealtime environment.
- Listen to what your child has to share.
- Help your child take turns sharing conversation and listening.
- Set and maintain limits while keeping a positive emotional connection with your child.
- Have a song you sing together before starting to eat.

## 4. Challenge, but with support

- Offer new foods neutrally.
- Involve your child - measuring, chopping, mixing, table setting.
- Give kids lots of opportunities to learn to like a new food (10-15 times).
- Encourage but don't force or pressure a child to eat a new food.
- Teach your child to use "a way out."
- Model eating/trying the new food.
- Discuss the new food – taste, texture, where it grows, etc.
- Help kids learn how to politely handle a food they try but don't like.
- Help kids learn to pay attention to what their stomach is telling them about their levels of hunger and fullness.
- Involve child in setting table and clean up.

## Resources and Articles

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### Books

- Becoming Attached: First relationships and how they shape our capacity to love; Robert Karen; Oxford University Press.
- A General Theory of Love; Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon; Random House.
- The Circle of Security Intervention: Enhancing Attachment in Early Parent-Child Relationships; Bert Powell, Glen Cooper, Kent Hoffman, Bob Marvin; Guilford Press
- How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character; Paul Tough; Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt

### Web Sites

- University of Idaho – Feeding Young Children in Group Settings - [www.ag.uidaho.edu/feeding](http://www.ag.uidaho.edu/feeding)
  - Videos - [www.ag.uidaho.edu/feeding/fortrainers/vignettes.html](http://www.ag.uidaho.edu/feeding/fortrainers/vignettes.html)
- Circle of Security – [www.circleofsecurity.net](http://www.circleofsecurity.net)
- Touching Hearts, Touching Minds – free materials and fun, practical ways to use them; designed to help you first touch parents' hearts, connect with them, and then facilitate learning - [www.touchingheartstouchingminds.com/index.php](http://www.touchingheartstouchingminds.com/index.php)
- Video of facilitated discussion - [www.touchingheartstouchingminds.com/tools\\_video.php](http://www.touchingheartstouchingminds.com/tools_video.php)

### Articles

- Wardle J, Cooke L, Gibson E, Sapochnik M, Sheiham A, Lawson M. Increasing children's acceptance of vegetables; a randomized trial of parent-led exposure. *Appetite*. 2003; 40:155–162.
- Johnson SL. Improving preschoolers' self-regulation of energy intake. *Pediatrics* 2000;106:1429-1435.
- Rhee KE, Lumeng JC, Appugliese DP, Kaciroti N, Bradley RH. Parenting styles and overweight status in first grade. *Pediatrics*. 2006 Jun;117(6):2047-54.
- Malhotra K, Herman AN, Wright G, Bruton Y, Fisher JO, Whitaker RC. Perceived benefits and challenges for low-income mothers of having family meals with preschool-aged children: childhood memories matter. *J Acad Nutr Diet*. 2013 Nov;113(11):1484-93.

### Videos

- Circle of Security animation video - <http://circleofsecurity.net/news/circle-of-security-animation-video>
- Circle of Security – attention vs, connection – <http://handsup.co.uk/projects/circle-of-security>
- A trailer from chapter 1 of the DVD You can view the trailer at [www.circleofsecurity.net](http://www.circleofsecurity.net) or <http://www.youtube.com/user/CircleOfSecurity>.
- Example of Strange Situation assessment used to measure attachment status [www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=PnFKaaOSPmk&feature=endscreen](http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=PnFKaaOSPmk&feature=endscreen)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTsewNrHUHU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTsewNrHUHU)
- Examples of secure, insecure avoidant, and insecure ambivalent attachment [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DH1m\\_ZMO7GU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DH1m_ZMO7GU)
- Dan Siegel on disorganized attachment [www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpQtPsubLzc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpQtPsubLzc); [www.youtube.com/watch?v=zovtRq4e2E8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zovtRq4e2E8)
- Example of still face experiment with Dr. Ed Tronick [www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmE3NfB\\_HhE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmE3NfB_HhE)
- Example of marshmallow experiment - Walter Mischel [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yo4WF3cSd9Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yo4WF3cSd9Q); [www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX\\_oy9614HQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX_oy9614HQ)  
[www.edweek.org/ew/section/video-galleries/index.html?bcpid=87655894001&bckey=AQ~~.AAAAD5nd3uE~.qqYiMH7TgT-Y1pIEqxqgQG2UrMv1XO1-&bctid=1170810266001](http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/video-galleries/index.html?bcpid=87655894001&bckey=AQ~~.AAAAD5nd3uE~.qqYiMH7TgT-Y1pIEqxqgQG2UrMv1XO1-&bctid=1170810266001)